

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

All THE YEAR ROUNDE

A Weekly Journal
CONDUCTED BY
CHARLES DICKENS

No. 1039. NEW SERIES.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 27, 1888.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

AT THE MOMENT OF VICTORY.

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CHAPTER XXXIV.

"I SAW nothing—absolutely nothing," said Lance. "All I know is that Madge gave a startled cry and fell forward fainting. Her nerves, I should say, were over-strung—she has been far from well lately, you know—and she fancied she saw something. It was a thousand pities she attempted the funeral-service."

The Vicar had come to Lance's aid in the churchyard, and between them they had got Madge down to her carriage, and thence home. Arrived at home, she had gone from one fainting fit to another during the early part of the night, and now, weak and exhausted, lay upon her bed while Sir Peter and Lance together discussed the strange occurrence.

Sir Peter echoed Lance's regret. "Yes, a thousand pities," he said, pushing back his chair and indulging in a brisk trot round the room, "but I've no doubt she'll be all right again by the morning; a good night's rest works wonders"—this was said at Lance's elbow. "And the little trip to Italy is just the very thing she's needing"—this was said at the door. "I say, Lance!"—here he came back at a run to Lance's elbow once more, with a look on his face which proclaimed a serious subject for thought on hand now.

Lance looked at him absently. He was leaning forward as he sat gazing dreamily into the fire. His appearance was scarcely that of a happy-hearted bridegroom who expected to have his happiness crowned on the morrow.

Sir Peter was determined to have the whole of his attention.

"I say, Lance," he said again, raising his voice, "I do hope they'll remember to unmuffle that bell at the church; it would be dreadful if they started your wedding-peal to-morrow with a muffled C."

Then he set off on tramp again once more.

"Oh, they'll think of it right enough. The men are supposed to have an idea or two about their work."

"I think I had better send down a message in the morning to make sure—or two, perhaps; one to the Vicar, and one to the verger?"

Here he paused in his quick march for a moment in front of his writing-table, as if intending there and then to despatch his notes to Vicar and verger. He took up a pen, felt its nib, then laid it down and rubbed his eyes.

"The truth of it is, I'm horribly sleepy," he said, deprecatingly, as if the fact called for an apology. "I've had, on the whole, a busy day—a busy and exciting day, I might say."

Lance roused himself from his reverie. "If I were you, I should go to bed. You'll have lots to do to-morrow, you know."

Sir Peter rubbed his eyes again.

"Yes, I suppose, off and on, there will be a good deal on my hands," he said, complacently, "and one can't do without sleep altogether."

"I wouldn't try if I were you. It's past two—"

"Yes, and I must be up early. I've told Simmonds to call me at five. And by the way, Lance, don't you think an awning should be put up from the church to the gate?—it might rain, you know."

By the way, I wonder if it will rain; I'll just tap the barometer again."

"The one outside your bedroom door is more trustworthy than this, and here's your lamp, Uncle Peter," said Lance, facilitating as far as possible the old gentleman's departure.

Half-way up the stairs he paused, calling to Lance over the balusters. "I say, Lance, I suppose there really is nothing to keep me up any longer? Madge is really coming round all right, isn't she?"

"Lady Judith said she left her asleep half-an-hour ago, and her maid has gone to bed in the next room—there can be nothing to keep you up. Good night."

Sir Peter went a step or two higher, then came to a standstill again. "And you may set your mind at rest about that bell, Lance," he said. "I shall go to sleep with it on my mind and think of it the very first thing in the morning, so don't you trouble about it."

But Lance made no reply this time. He had gone back to the study, and his gloomy thoughts swooping down upon him once more, his ears were shut to Sir Peter's voice.

He leaned moodily against the mantelpiece, staring into the live coals—his thoughts a turmoil so far as the present was concerned, and a blank as to the future.

What was it that had changed Madge so much of late? What was the reason of her extraordinary terror in the churchyard, and above all, why was it that she had failed, in response to his direct appeal, to give pledge for pledge, and reciprocate trust with trust? These were the uppermost of the doubts which presented themselves for solution. But below these, sounding a deeper note, were other doubts and questions equally difficult to answer. Did this marriage that he was about to contract with Madge really promise happiness in the future for her or for him, or, to put it on a lower ground, even contentment and satisfaction? Had he been wise in thus yielding to Uncle Peter's wishes? Was not the past too real, too living for it to be hurried in this way into its grave of oblivion?

The fire burned low; the lamp on the table grew dim while these thoughts, in slow procession, trooped across his brain. The room was a large one; it seemed all shadows at the farther end, save where the half-open door admitted a faint patch of lamplight from the dimly-lighted, outer hall.

Across this faint patch of light there suddenly fell a stronger gleam as from a lamp carried by hand. A tremulous hand, too, it must have been, for the gleam wavered; now high, now low, it fell upon the floor.

"It's Uncle Peter back again," thought Lance, leaving his leaning posture at the fireplace and going to the door.

But in the doorway he paused, astonished to see not Sir Peter but Madge descending the broad flight of stairs in some long, trailing white gown.

His first thought was that she was walking in her sleep; a second look undeceived him. Her steps were too rapid and unsteady for those of a sleep-walker, also her eyes had not the fixed, staring expression of a dreamer, but were bright and dancing. The light of her lamp thrown upward on her face emphasized its pallid wanless, framed in a cloudy halo of short, dusky, dishevelled hair.

"Why, Madge, what is it?" he cried, advancing to meet her and taking the lamp from her hand.

"I have something to say to you—something I must say at once—to-night, for I cannot live through another night with it unsaid," answered Madge, in low, unsteady tones, as she passed in front of him into the library.

He followed her in simple blank astonishment. He set down her lamp on a side table and laid his hand on her shoulder.

"Say on, dear, if it must be said," he answered, kindly.

And standing thus facing her, and looking down into her troubled face, he was struck with the havoc which sleepless nights and anxious days had wrought in her. Madge, at her best, would never have been a beauty; but he had been accustomed to see her piquante, radiant, full of animation and spirits. It seemed impossible that aught but years of actual bodily suffering could have sharpened her features in this fashion, traced such rings round her eyes, and lines of care about her mouth.

Her eyes did not meet his as they stood thus. They went wandering hither and thither, now to the dark corners at the farther end of the room, anon to the half-opened door with a searching, terrified look in them.

"What is it, Madge?" he asked.
"What do you think you see there?"

And then another fear took possession of him. This might be the first stage of

some delirious fever. The right course would be to get her as quickly as possible back to her room.

He took her hands in his.

"Wouldn't it be better to get back to your room, Madge, and try for some sleep?" he asked. "To-morrow, you can tell me anything you like, you know."

Madge did not seem to hear him, though he could feel her thrill to his touch. Her eyes were still wandering from corner to corner, the terror in them deepening.

"Do you see anything?" she asked, presently, in a frightened whisper.

"Nothing—absolutely," he answered, the impression that she was suffering from delirium growing upon him. "Come, Madge, let me see you up the stairs again to your room. It'll soon be morning; try and get an hour or two of sleep."

She drew a long breath and looked up in his face.

"Sleep!" she repeated. "I tell you there will be no sleep for me till I've told you the truth—the whole truth from beginning to end!"

She looked down on his hands which still clasped her cold trembling ones in a warm grasp, and suddenly bowed her head over them and kissed them passionately.

"Oh dear, dear hands!" she cried, brokenly, "how can I speak words which will make them grow cold as death to me!"

Lance grew alarmed.

"I don't think anything you could tell me would bring that about, Madge," he answered, gravely; but for all that his heart quaked for what her tale might be.

She looked up in his face piteously.

"Not if I were to tell you—that it was I who drove Jane Shore out of the house and sent her to her death!" she asked, bringing out the words with difficulty, and with many a pause between them.

His hands let go at once.

"What!" he cried, hoarsely, and he recoiled a step, staring at her blankly.

Madge's breath came in gasps.

"It's true! It's true!" she cried, bringing out her words now in a rush. "I found out her secret, and flashed it out on her on the night of the ball, in the picture placed opposite the mirror in my boudoir; and—and—you know the rest."

And the confession made now, she sank, trembling, into a chair which stood near, covering her face with her hands.

Lance drew a step nearer. His face had suddenly grown hard, white, rigid.

"Will you be good enough to tell me what that secret was, and how you found it out?" he asked, in a voice that matched his face.

Madge drew her hands from her face, looking up at him wonderingly. Was this Lance's voice, with a ring of iron in it, in place of its usual mellow kindliness?

His set face repeated his question.

Then Madge, with trembling lips, and in a tone so low that it sank at times to a whisper, repeated the story which the newspaper paragraph had told. Once or twice she nearly broke down; it was a hard story to tell to the man standing there facing her, with arms folded on his chest, and white, set face.

Only once he interrupted her to ask the question who had possession of the newspaper now. But that one interruption nearly brought her story to an abrupt ending, and it was with many a halt and a voice that threatened to fail her altogether, that she resumed and told the finish of that ill-fated night of the ball—Jane Shore's visit to her room, and her farewell threat.

Lance drew a long breath as she finished speaking, but said never a word.

She clasped her hands together, looking up piteously into his face. "Oh, Lance!" she cried, "do not look at me like that—speak to me, tell me you forgive me now that I have told you the whole truth!"

His face grew harder still. "Will you telling me the whole truth raise her from the dead and give her back to me?" he asked in harsh, cold tones. Then he turned his back on her and went towards the door.

She sprang after him and laid one hand on his arm. "Lance, Lance," she cried, passionately, "do not leave me like this! We must not part in this way!"

It was easy to read her sentence in his eyes. They said plainly enough: "Everything is at an end between us! All I ask of you now is to keep out of my sight to the last hour of my life!"

"Speak to me, speak to me," she implored, "one word, just one word of kindness or pity!"

"Kindness! Pity!" he repeated.

Madge's head drooped. "I know, I know," she said, "what you would say—that I had neither kindness nor pity for her. But if you did but know what I have suffered, what I do suffer——"

Her voice gave way, though her eyes were dry. She bowed her head on the hand which clutched his arm.

"You could not help forgiving me if you only knew how I have been—how I am punished," she went on, piteously. "She has kept her word; she stood behind me in the churchyard to-night; she followed me home and sat beside my bed; she came down the stairs with me."

She broke off for a moment, then suddenly lifted her face to his once more.

"Look in my face," she said, humbly, pleadingly. "You can see what I have suffered!"

His words came stern and wrathful now:

"You looked in her face and saw what she had suffered; but did that teach you pity?" he asked, striving as he spoke to release his arm from her clasp.

But there had come to her fingers a strength twice their own, and their clasp did not loosen. There rose up in her mind some faint sense of injustice. It seemed as if her great love for him, as well as her suffering, must be written on her face, and plead for her.

"You do not know—you do not understand," she faltered, then broke off.

The story of this great passionate love of hers would be even harder to tell than had been the story of her mercilessness to the woman who had threatened to frustrate that love.

"After all these years——" she began, then broke off again.

All his reply was the endeavour once more to unloosen her fingers.

She could bear it no longer.

"Oh, Lance, Lance, it was for you, because I loved you," she cried, passionately. And then tears came to her at last, and she bowed her head once more on his arm.

But it was to be neither rest nor hiding-place for her now. He released himself from her clasping, trembling hands. For once he raised his voice.

"Then I would to Heaven that you had hated me, since your love has done this for me," he said, hotly, turning away from her towards the door once more.

She put herself between him and the door.

"Oh, Lance, Lance," she implored, "don't leave me thus; only say you'll forgive me, or if you cannot do that, say you will try to in the years to come—some day, some long way off, perhaps."

Then she threw herself on her knees at his feet, crying brokenly:

"Oh, Lance, Lance, kill me, punish me,

do anything cruel you please to me, but only tell me you'll try to forgive me in the years to come. We must not part in this way. In this life we may never set eyes on each other again."

He put her clasped hands stretched upward to his face away, and passed on to the door. He turned and gave her one farewell look as she crouched on the floor in her tumbled white draperies, her weeping face hidden now in her hands.

"I pray Heaven," he said, in low constrained tones that emphasized his prayer, "that in this life I may never set eyes on your face again."

OLYMPIA.

THE connection of the show at what is rather absurdly called "Olympia," with an Exhibition of Irish industries is rather remote. You are to make-believe a great deal, and persuade yourself that the parade of Kerry cows, and the horse show with a leap or two, have taken place in the park of an Irish mansion. Then you are further to imagine that, a good part of the day being left, the family and the visitors form themselves into a committee of sports and fill up the time with a sham fight. There is an old tower in the grounds, as there is in many an Irish demesne. This is held by part of the company disguised as Sepoys, who hoist a green flag—not Irish, we are assured, but Mahomedan. Before fighting these Sepoys amuse themselves, after their fashion, with jugglers' tricks, and a dance of nautch-girls, and tent-peggings, and the sword-dance and such like games. Then the British troops come on; there is a skirmish, the Sepoys are driven in, and the fort is stormed.

The thing, of course, winds up with fireworks, Roman fire, wheels, and a gas "good-night," with rose, shamrock, and thistle.

These are some of the accessories of what "the Press unanimously declares to be the most useful, practical, interesting and attractive of all the Exhibitions." Comprehensive enough, and attractive to those who are fond of "assaults of arms," and to those who like a "real Irish piper"—a little man in green, with stockings and knee-breeches, and buckled shoes—playing jigs on pipes which have a bellows instead of the Scotch "bag," and are, therefore, independent of the mouth; and who enjoy sitting about listening to the

really fine English organ, or gathering round the young lady who plays on a Limerick piano.

But how far this or any Exhibition is useful and practical is a question. An Exhibition is for a nation what an "at home" is for an individual. It means that you have put your house in order and have something to show which it is worth peoples' while to come and look at. This something at Olympia is not the sham fight, or the theatre, or the fireworks; these are just like the public singer whom some people provide for the additional delectation of their guests. What friends come for is not the singer, it is me and my library, or picture-gallery or garden, and the talk that I and those whom I bring together are able and willing to give them a share in.

So to Olympia friends, as distinguished from mere pleasure-seekers, come to see what Ireland is doing in the way of manufactures. And this is unmistakeably "useful, practical, and interesting," besides having for a great many true friends of Ireland the charm of novelty. Here are all kinds of things made in Ireland, and just as good as those manufactured over here: sweetmeats, from Great Britain Street and O'Connell Street, Dublin; iron-work, brass-fittings, cutlery, glass, pottery, marble. Even calico, as good as the best, is made in at least two places—Portlaw, near Waterford, and Drogheda. But of all the Irish manufactures, except the linen, that which is best represented is the woollen. For years "the trade" has known that exceptionally good tweeds are made in Ireland; but they have not communicated their knowledge to their customers. Many an Englishman has worn, on his yearly trip to the Lakes, or to Scotland, a suit of "Irish frieze," without in the least suspecting where the well-looking stuff came from. "Frieze," he thinks of as the coarse, weather-stained stuff, thick as a board and almost as unyielding, which is the pig-drover's ordinary wear, and which "Paddy from Cork" is supposed to trail on the ground that any one who is "blue mouldy for want of a beating" may step on it, as he walks up and down flourishing his shillelagh.

Unhappily, Irish goods had got a bad name. How, is a long and sad story. Ireland has always been managed by an "Ascendency," who looked to England for support, and repaid her help by upholding everything English. That was all fair;

but it was too bad when they went on to assert that Ireland was a modern Nazareth, out of which it was impossible that any good thing should come.

Years ago, talking about butter with a Bristol salesman, an old friend of mine, I said:

"Well, I've had so much 'mild Waterford,' and 'best Cork,' and 'Clonmel' of you, that suppose I have some of that 'prime Dorset' for a change?"

"You can if you like," he replied, "but if you do you'll be eating just the same as you had last time. That's 'best Cork,' only we call it 'Dorset.'"

"Why?"

"Because by giving it that name, we get a penny or three-halfpence more a pound for it, that's all. You see nobody believes that the Irish can make the best butter. Why, bless you; there's more 'Dorset' sold in Bristol alone than was ever made in the county."

I hoped that that state of things had gone by, that "no Irish need apply" was obsolete, at least so far as eatables went. But, no; the other day in Cork, looking over one of the largest butter concerns, I saw a hundred or so of neat little white firkins, "all made in Copenhagen," said my guide, answering my unspoken enquiry. "And when we've filled them, we sell the butter as Danish; and I'm ashamed to say that at some of our Irish tip-top hotels, they won't eat anything but 'Danish.'" Below there was a row of natty French baskets. "Yes; these we fill with best Brittany. That brings the highest price of all, yet every pound of it comes from a dozen miles round Cork."

Then the second and third qualities are sold as "Irish," and people think that the Irish can't make anything worth eating or wearing, and the very excellence of their productions is used as an argument against them.

Olympia ought to give the death-blow to this mischievous nonsense; ought to put an end once and for ever to the self-depreciation, not at all of the Socratic kind, in which "the classes" in Ireland have so long indulged.

Irish woollens have made their way in Australia and in the States; they are as popular in Austria as Irish frieze used to be in Italy in the thirteenth century; and henceforth no Londoner who has visited Olympia with his eyes open, can well be ignorant of the different kinds—Mahony's, of Blarney, "four-leaved sham-

rock," trade mark ; Clayton's, of Navan ; O'Brien's, of Cork ; Athlone Woollen Company ; Caledon Mills ; Thomastown Mills ; Laragh Mills at Castleblayney ; besides the home-spun woven in the cottages by the peat-fire during the long winter nights, and the wet, dreary days when nothing can be done on the land. There are stalls of this homespun inside the Exhibition ; and outside, in "the Donegal village"—with its paper walls coloured to look as if built of big, irregular stones, and its thatch that ought to be roped down with straw-bands weighted with big stones, and the hayrick and peat-stack in the yard, and the boundary fence of the same material of which the grotto is made—you may see a homespun weaver at work. In the village, too, you may see the dyeing. You may also see Timmins of Portadown, weaving damask ; and Bridget Gildea, of Ardara, "sprigging" handkerchiefs. The places are as unlike as the workers—Portadown in County Down, the most English part of Ireland, a bitter Orange centre ; Ardara in the wildest part of West Donegal, not far from the Rosses, that black, wretched, low-lying track (*cos* means a marshy valley, as it does also in Cornish) which suffered so in the great famine.

The Kerry dairy I have seen thrice—twice in strawberry-time (and here let me tell you those Irish strawberries and Kerry cream were something to be remembered) ; once when the strawberries were replaced by apricots. This time it was night, and to sit there sipping cream and chatting to the pretty, fresh-coloured, daintily-dressed Kerry milk-maids, amid the rush of the Switchback "Ballyhooly" Railway, and in the twinkle of the variegated lamps, was not at all unpleasant. Those milk-maids are well looked after ; they all live together under a firm yet kindly superintendent, Miss Kirby, and have their own priest, and are well able if they please to hire a cab on Sundays to see their friends, seeing that they get the magnificent sum of a pound a week. Oh, Canon Bagot, Canon Bagot, grand promoter of separators and creameries, and all other new-fangled ways of turning cream into butter ; I never happened to come during one of your lectures. Had I done so, I should certainly have asked how you expected these young women were to settle down again in their quiet villages after three months or more of London, and the adulation of 'Arry and the noise of the

"Canadian grand tour," and the "Ballyhooly" Switchback still ringing in their ears.

You may do worse than buy a six-penny pot of Kerry cream—I can testify that it will keep good for four days—and a pound of Kerry butter in a pretty carton box ; and, if you remember the address, you may order your next couple of fowls from Cummings, of Kingstown. He will also send you Irish eggs, and his dainty little boxes are so clean that the idea of any but the freshest of new-laid eggs coming out of them is preposterous. One happy change had passed over the Exhibition between my July and my September visit. In July a Belfast man, in charge of a tweed and serge stall, answered my enquiry : "How do you like the place?" with, "Ugh, it's too full of Whitechapel Jews." How these gentry got admission, I cannot tell ; but there they were—opticians who, when you asked if their wares were made in Ireland, candidly told you : "The pebbles of the spectacles are ground there ;" bog-oak sellers, who either did not know, or else wouldn't confess, that the little brooches and such like are not cut out of oak at all, but are made in some far finer-grained wood ; musical instrument vendors, whose only claim to a place in Olympia was that they were "sole agents for Ireland for so and so's harmoniums." How any one could think that Irish industries were promoted by allowing these gentry to come to the front is "one of the things that no fellow can understand."

Why, again, should Carson's paint be included among Irish exhibits ? And on what principle has the Junior Army and Navy Stores a stall here because it has a branch in Dublin ? Brophy is an Irish name ; but he is head-master of a London Institute, and his non-arsenical wall-papers are made in Manchester Square. The inevitable soap, of course, is here ; where is it not ? Yet, please to remember, there are at least two stalls of Irish-made soap, and that Lewis of Dublin is a first-rate perfumer in every branch ; and his "Eblana Water"—sold on his stall—is a good substitute for Eau de Cologne. Doulton's ware is sufficiently known, without being pushed to the front at Olympia. Black-rock pottery, and that made at Monkstown, also near Dublin, should have filled the whole space, along with that Spanish-looking ware which Mr. Vodrey had invented just in time for the Dublin Exhibition of

1882. Then we must remember that the wall plaques and "sanitary arrangements" bearing the name, "Jennings, Lambeth," were really made at Belleek. You will not see any of these on the Belleek stall, nor will you, on the other hand, see any of the highest style of Belleek ware: perhaps the managers did not like to trust their very best things. But you will see a quantity of very pretty teapots, and cups, and cream-jugs, and épergnes and biscuit figures, none of them like anything else, for the late Mr. Armstrong, who started the Belleek works in that far-off corner just where Ulster and Connaught meet, impressed his individuality on the work so strongly that "his mark" still persists.

What else? I'm not a living catalogue, though I hope, if I was, I should be a better one than that sixpenny deception which I was deluded into buying. Go and see for yourself. You had better not drink any whisky. I am not a teetotaler; but it goes against me to see raw spirits sold at an Exhibition stall, and young girls tossing off their glass of undiluted fire-water. I cannot help thinking what a scene it would be if every exhibiting whisky-maker retailed his wares in like manner, and the stout-makers as well, and the aerated-water men.

Buy a packet or two of Irish toffee, and half-a-dozen cakes of "butter-Irish," and, if you like to give a few packets to my friend Father Davis's Baltimore boys, I shall not quarrel with you. Poor lads! It must be far wearier than a long sea-voyage for them to be taken from fresh, breezy Baltimore, and stuck here day after day to make a pretence of mending their nets. The Baltimore fishery, by the way, shows what may be done by helping people to help themselves. "I won't give them money doles," said Baroness Burdett-Coutts, "but, if you can undertake to see that they spend it in getting boats, I'll lend them some." Father Davis undertook the work—oh, if there were a priest like him at every little fishing place all round the island!—the Baroness lent the money; the boats were bought and rigged; the fish caught, and sold; the loan-instalments punctually repaid—"Not one defaulter," the Baroness's man of business told me last July—and since this began, Father Davis has got Government to help found a fishery school, where boys from every part of Ireland are trained, and then sent home to help their neighbourhoods to better methods.

The great famine ruined the fisheries; and, as Ireland never got anything like the same help in the way of bounties, etc., which was given to Scotland, the success of that Baltimore experiment ought to lead Government to go in extensively for intelligent help to Irish fisheries, avoiding jobbery, that curse of Government work all the world over.

There has been jobbery enough over what has been done. At a lovely place on the west coast, a friend of mine saw a fine new pier, forming a quasi harbour; and was astonished at the absence of boats.

"What's this built for?" he asked his guide.

"Faith, sir, it's mighty convenient for Captain Scratch, who lives at the big house. He moors his yacht there, and his friends that do be passing, moor theirs; but devil a fisherman uses it, for there's no fishermen about here at all."

The astute Captain Scratch had not only secured some Government money himself, but also got a good deal out of the priest, who had begged hard for a public works' grant for the parish. Still, grants of any kind are better than "charity." Some of the islanders, in the Arran isles for instance, are getting quite demoralised with doles. Their best friends, Mr. Michael Davitt among them, strongly deprecate the begging, and insist on industries being started—a fishery if possible, this being much needed to give men, who at present have nothing but their skin "currags" (coracles), a fair chance against the outsiders who have decked boats, and can therefore go to the deep-sea fishing grounds.

Their islands are full of prehistoric remains, and beehive huts, and old, old churches. I should be sorry to think of their exchanging home-spun for shoddy, and their brogues of untanned hide for Northampton or even Cork-made boots.

Boots remind me of Irish tanning, one of the decayed but still surviving industries. There used to be fifty tanneries in Cork alone; and almost every village had one. They fell into the background like so many things, because their masters did not keep pace with the times—neglected the new inventions that cheapen cost if they do not improve the product. For a while, during the Crimean War, Government drew a good part of its leather from Ireland; and it would be a useful, as well as a graceful thing, if Government was to give a few contracts in the sister island.

This holds good not of leather only. There is one writing-paper mill in Ireland, one only in a country many parts of which are admirably suited for the manufacture. The neighbourhood of Dublin is studded with ruined paper-mills, killed by the removal of the paper duty. If Government were to insist that at least the paper used in the Irish Government offices should be Irish made, the Clondalkin and other mills would spring into life again, and the running sore of emigration, which is draining the life-blood out of the land, would be checked.

So you see there are serious considerations involved in this Olympia show; it is an effort in which England must help, else it will fail as other efforts have.

Well, "Olympia" will do good by making Irish industries known in England. And Yorkshire and Lancashire need not be afraid; Ireland will never be a dangerous competitor. There are a thousand and one things which will always be made in England, and never even attempted in Ireland. But the Irish will have more money to buy these if the industries in which they used to excel, and which still, despite the long bad times, have some life in them, are encouraged. We know little of the best Irish scenery. Everybody has at least heard of Killarney, and the Giants' Causeway; but the cliffs of Moher, the Horn Head, the caves of Lough Swilly, and Carrigan Head—all figured in the Religious Tract Society's "Irish Pictures," are as unknown to the English public as are the Clonmacnois crozier, the Ardagh chalice, Saint Molaise's Gospel-case, and the other art-treasures figured in the same volume. The author of these "Irish Pictures" apologises for saying nothing about "Home Rule." Surely the apology is needless; it would be a sad thing if we could not take an interest in Irish scenery, and Irish antiquities, ay, and in Irish manufactures, without taking sides on the Land Question, or becoming political partisans. These things are outside, and above, the range of politics. What Ireland has long needed is to become "the fashion." It has always been just the reverse. "The Cinderella of the United Kingdom," is too true a description of her relation to the rest of our islands. Hence discontent and restlessness. She is always looking for the Fairy Prince, and has been only too willing to accept pretenders of all kinds. Olympia may help her to that position which Scotland has held in "Society" ever since George the Fourth went to Edin-

burgh and strutted about in Highland costume.

The Irish are much too imitative; that is why they have joined in the boycott against their country's manufactures. When they find them popular in England, they will be sure to discover in them excellencies hitherto unnoticed. A sign of the times is a series of articles on "Irish industries," in such a paper as Myra's Journal. A few years ago one would as soon have expected Myra to be discussing the fashions in vogue in the planet Mars. Yet now Myra writes with an evident knowledge of the subject, and freely scolds the Irish for their want of patriotism in this matter of manufactures; a humiliating contrast to the determined way in which Poles and Hungarians encourage home industry. For Londoners the main thing is to be sure there is in Ireland something worth encouraging; and on this score one who has seen Olympia can have no doubt at all. Why, the art serges from Laragh Mills are alone worth a visit—and, as for Mrs. Hart's stall, have not so many Duchesses ordered her red frieze cloak that she has felt warranted in naming it "the Duchess"?

SWANS.

THOUGH the old coaching house with the sign of the Swan with two Necks—a corruption of two nicks, alluding to the double chevron, the peculiar badge of the Vintners' Company, who have for several hundred years enjoyed the privilege of keeping swans between London and some miles above Windsor—has long ceased to exist, and cygnets no more figure as of yore on civic bills of fare on Lord Mayor's Day, the bird itself still graces the Thames, and yearly, in the month of August, the swan markers of the Crown, and of the Dyers' and Vintners' Companies, ascend the river for the purpose of marking the young birds, a custom known as "upping," which has become corrupted into "hopping."

Formerly the citizens, in gaily-dressed barges, went up the river on such occasions, and, landing at Barn Elms, partook of a cold collation and danced upon the grass. Even so late as 1793 the Companies sent six wherries as far as Marlow; but the number of swans is now much diminished, and their value has also declined.

Owing, it may be, to the romantic stories of mythology, which represent Jupiter as

having, on one occasion, assumed the shape of this graceful creature, the swan was formerly regarded as a bird Royal, which no subject might possess without licence from the Crown, which was only granted subject to the condition that every bird in a "game" of swans should bear a distinguishing badge of ownership on the bill.

The protection thus specially afforded would lead to the inference that the bird was not originally a native of the British Isles, and accordingly we find it stated that it was introduced from Cyprus, by Richard Cœur de Lion. The value of these birds in the reign of Edward the Third may be estimated from the fact that in days when the best capon sold for sixpence, the best hare for fourpence, and when twelve eggs fetched but a penny, the price of a swan was fixed at four shillings, poulters being forbidden by proclamation to exact any larger sum. In the time of Edward the Fourth no one was permitted to keep swans who was not possessed of a freehold of at least five marks yearly; and by an Act of Henry the Seventh, persons convicted of taking swans' eggs were liable to a year's imprisonment with fine; while stealing, netting, or driving the birds themselves, was punished with even greater severity.

Large flocks formerly ventured below London Bridge, and in 1381-2, "swannes" which thus came through the bridge became the perquisites of the Constable of the Tower.

Paulus Jovius, describing the Thames, 1552, says that it "abounds with swans swimming in flocks, the sight of which and their noise, are very agreeable to the fleets that meet them in their course."

Leland, in his Swan's Song, imagines a Thames swan,

With archèd neck
Between her white wings mantling,

sailing down stream, from Oxford to Greenwich, describing the various places of note which pass before her view; and Shakespeare may thus have seen them "proudly rowing with oary feet," and so makes York compare the strength of his followers at the battle of Wakefield to a swan encountering the force of a tidal stream :

As I have seen a swan,
With bootless labour swim against the tide
And spend her strength with over-matching wave.

In the reign of Henry the Eighth, commissioners were appointed specially to

control the swanneries on the river Witham in Lincolnshire, and among them Dymoke the champion, who, it will be remembered, held the manor of Scrobbesby by tenure to appear armed on Coronation Day, and challenge all or any who affirmed that the King was not the lawful heir to the Crown. Ordinances were drawn up by these commissioners, in conformity with which, every swanherd on the river was directed to attend the King's swanherd when required, and all owners of swans were to have their names recorded in his book; no swanherd was to mark a swan save in the presence of the Royal swanherd or his deputy, and the nicking was to be performed in the cygnet stage of existence, when the young birds were to receive the same marks as had been borne by their parents before them. The King's swanherd also kept a book in which were recorded the various swan marks, together with the names of all owners of swans and their swanherds. No fewer than four hundred swans appeared on table at the installation dinner of Neville, Archbishop of York, 1464, when the birds fetched two shillings each, "being fourpence less than the price of a prime fat wether."

In the time of Elizabeth, upwards of nine hundred distinct marks were recognised by the Royal swanherd, whose jurisdiction extended over the whole kingdom, and whose office, to which he was appointed by the Lord Chamberlain, was sometimes called the "swanship." The mark, usually consisting of annulets, chevrons, crescents, crosses, initials, etc., and called by Sir Edward Coke "cigninota," was cut with a sharp instrument, or else branded with a hot iron upon the upper mandible; and swans of a certain age not marked, or, as it was termed, clear-billed, became Crown property, except in certain cases when a special grant conveyed a right to seize and keep any adult swan which might not have been marked. Thus the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and even some of the Colleges, are still privileged to keep what are usually referred to as "games" of swans, though that wise lady, Dame Juliana, in the Boke of S. Albans, assures us that we ought to speak of "an herde of swannys." The city of Oxford also was, at one time, possessed of a swannery, and Eton College still enjoys the privilege of keeping swans on the Thames. The Royal swan mark is composed of five open rather long ovals, pointed at each extremity, and has remained unchanged since the

commencement of the reign of George the Third.

The Thames, Trent, and Yare, are the chief English streams in which swans are now met with; but many of the old Abbeys possessed swanneries, as, for instance, the one at Abbotsbury, which, at the dissolution, passed to the Earl of Ilchester, on the water called the Fleet, inside the Chesil Bank, on the coast of Dorset. This swannery seems to have existed for centuries without any material alterations, and in the reign of Elizabeth we are told that "the premises, wreck of the sea, exception from the power of the Lord High Admiral in this manor, the water, soil and fishery called East Flete, and the flight of swans, called the game of swans, yearly breeding, nesting, and coming there, were held by John Strangeways, Esquire, of the Queen in chief. Also the site of the monastery, flight of swans breeding, etc., in the estuary called the Flete in Abbotsbury." The swannery now contains about eight hundred or nine hundred birds, which are often exceedingly quarrelsome during the breeding season, when fatal fights are by no means uncommon. Cart-loads of stubble are placed by the keepers within easy reach, from which the nests are built. Each nest contains from five to eight eggs, and the cygnets, when a month old, are marked by having a small round hole punched in the web of the foot.

The corporation of Norwich exercises a protecting right over the birds found in the river Yare, and the swanpit at Norwich seems to be the only place now existing for fattening cygnets for the table.

Yarrell relates that early in the month of August, the swans, fifty to seventy in number, are collected in a stew and fed with barley; they are usually ready to be killed in November; after which time they lose their fat, and the flesh becomes dark and tough. A printed copy of verses is—or was—usually sent with each bird, containing a recipe for cooking the swan, which was on no account to be skinned.

The mute or domestic swan is found in a wild state in Europe and Asia, as well as in the countries between the Black and Caspian Seas. Water is its element, and Bewick writes that at the setting in of frosty weather, wild swans associate in great numbers, and, thus united, use every effort to prevent the water from freezing, which they accomplish by constantly dashing it with their extended wings. While engaged with their young, swans are full

of spirit, and their vigorous wings preserve them against the attacks even of the eagle, and it has been said that a fair blow from the wing of a swan will break a man's leg. Swans have been known to live as long as fifty years, and so fierce are they when guarding their eggs that instances have occurred in which black swans, though little inferior to themselves in size, have been killed by their white relations; one such occurrence took place in the Regent's Park, and is thus related:

"The two white swans pursued the black one with the greatest ferocity, and one of them succeeded in grasping the other's neck between its mandibles, and then shook it violently. With difficulty the black swan extricated itself from the murderous grasp, hurried on shore, tottered forward a few paces, and fell to die. Its death appeared to be attended with great agony, and its foes continued sailing, with every feather on end, up and down towards the spot where their victim fell, seemingly proud of their conquest."

The wild swan, or Hooper, is not unfrequently found in England during severe winters. The birds arrive in autumn in large flocks from the North, penetrating even as far as the counties of Hants and Sussex. They are readily tameable, and a curious occurrence is related with reference to some which bred in the Zoological Gardens in London in 1839. The cygnets, when only a few days old, were sunning themselves on the margin of one of the islands, while the parent birds were swimming near. A carrion crow made a descent and struck at one of the cygnets, whereupon the old male swan came up in an instant, seized the crow with his beak, pulled him into the water, and in spite of all resistance, held him there until he died.

Great numbers of wild swans are killed in Iceland for the sake of their down and feathers, being ridden down with horses and dogs in the autumn, when they are somewhat impeded in their flight through moulting. It is said that they can fly at the rate of one hundred miles per hour, and they emit a note resembling the word "hoop," repeated some ten or a dozen times, which sounds aloft like a trumpet-call. The impression produced on the hearer, however, appears to vary, for while Montagu assures us that the sound reminded him of the "wild swan's death hymn," described by the ancient poets, others speak of it as resembling the notes

of a violin, and others again liken it to the music of silvery bells.

Sometimes Polish refugees seek the shelter of our shores; and specimens are found of the Polish or Immutable swan, so called from the fact of the young ones being white, like the parents, and not passing through the grey, or intermediate, state of plumage.

Especial interest attaches to the black swan of Australia, so long considered to be a myth. It was on the sixth of January, 1697, that the Dutch navigator, William de Vlaming, visiting the west coast of Zaidland (Southland), sent two boats to explore an estuary which he had discovered. Four black swans were caught by the sailors, while engaged on this service, at the mouth of what is now known as Swan River, West Australia—a colony which has adopted the bird as its armorial device—and two of them were taken alive to Batavia. Subsequent voyagers, Cook and others, found that the species ranged over the greater part of Australia; but it has since rapidly decreased in numbers. Its flesh is stated to be both tough and flavourless.

The swan's nest consists of a large mass of aquatic plants, often piled to a height of a couple of feet, and perhaps six feet in diameter, in the midst of which is a hollow containing the eggs, which are of a greyish-olive colour. If the water threatens to rise, more material—which the male bird brings to the spot, and the female works in—is added to the deposit beneath the eggs, which are thus gradually raised beyond the risk of danger. The nests are usually found upon the bank, close to the water, in some sheltered spot, and generally on the shore of a little island. During the first period of their life, the young swans mount upon their mother's back, and are so conveyed from one place to another, the Pen, as the female bird is called (the male being the Cob), either lowering herself a little in the water, or, otherwise, assisting their ascent with her foot.

So doth the swan her downy cygnets save,
Keeping them prisoner underneath her wings.

Henry VI., part 1, act v., scene 3.

This habit of carrying the young has been observed in the case of many other water birds, as, for instance, of the horned grebe in Iceland, whose young have been remarked as being concealed beneath the wings of the parent bird, and have been seen to fall thence into the water when it

has been shot. The family continue to associate through the winter, but, under the influence of returning spring, the parent birds drive away from them the young brood of the previous year, and oblige them to shift for themselves. Shakespeare, it will be remembered, likens our island to the eyrie of the royal bird:

I the world's volume
Our Britain seems as of it, but not in it;
In a great pool, a swan's nest.

Formerly, when a swan made her nest on the banks of a river, rather than on the islands, one young bird, called the ground-bird, was given to the owner of the soil, who protected the nest; a money consideration, however, is now given instead. The matrimonial engagements between swans are kept with exemplary fidelity, and last, it is said, throughout their lives.

Swans are neither strictly vegetable feeders like geese, nor are they so carnivorous as ducks, occupying, in this respect, a position somewhat intermediate between the two. Occasionally they will seize and swallow small fish like bleak or roach, and in the spawning season, they will devour the eggs till they can eat no longer.

The swan being identified with Orpheus, and being called also the bird of Apollo, the god of music, powers of song have been often attributed to it, and as often denied. It has enjoyed the repute of wailing a dirge before its decease, whose echoes die away over the prostrate form which has uttered it.

Thus on Maeander's flow'ry margin lies
Th' expiring swan, and as he sings he dies.

The song has been made the medium of satire:

Swans sing before they die.
Methinks, 'twere no bad thing,
Could certain persons die before they sing.

Shakespeare makes Prince Henry at his father's death exclaim:

'Tis strange that death should sing!
I am the cygnet to this pale faint swan,
Who chants a doleful hymn to his own death;
And from the organ-pipe of frailty sings
His soul and body to their lasting rest.

King John, act v., scene 7.

It is said to have a soft, low voice, plaintive if monotonous, and Colonel Hawker has printed a few bars of swan melody formed with two notes C and the minor third (E flat); and the musician, it is added, kept working his head, as though delighted with his own performance. But the late

Mr. Waterton had once the rare opportunity of witnessing a swan's death, and the silence which the bird maintained convinced him that its dying song is nothing but a fable, the origin of which is lost in the shades of antiquity.

Swans have been used as a device in heraldry; a white swan having been adopted as the badge of the House of Cleves from the well-known legend of the Knight, who miraculously arrived by the Rhine in a little boat drawn by a swan, and married the heiress of Cleves. Formerly men swore by the swan, as they did also by the peacock (by "cock and pye"), and even, according to Athenaeus, by "cabbages" and "capers;" and crusaders often took the swan oath on setting out for the Holy Land. Mathew of Westmister records how Edward the First, then Prince Edward, went to the Abbey, where were brought in solemn pomp before him, two swans, gorgeously caparisoned, with beaks gilt, and on them the King made a vow before Heaven and the swans, that he would march into Scotland to avenge the fate of John Comyn, and punish the perfidy of the Scots.

PAYING THE PIPER.

ALTHOUGH the energetic and ingenious Mr. Augustus Harris succeeded last year in galvanising it into something like life again, and proposes to continue his endeavours to keep it in a state of more or less vitality, it is not to be doubted that, as a great public institution, Italian Opera may be looked upon as being practically defunct. Gone, never to return, are the days when everybody who was, or wanted to be taken for, anybody raved about Malibran, or Pasta, or Grisi, Rubin, Lablache, Ronconi, Alboni, or Mario. Gone are the days when a "box at the Opera" was almost as necessary to a leader of society as her carriage; when a certain air of exclusiveness, impalpable but unmistakeable, hung about stalls and crush-rooms; when Fops' Alley was the natural home of the fashionable lounger. Gone, too, are the simple operas—gone, or put away on a high shelf out of reach—in which our fathers and grandfathers took delight. The Donizettis and Bellinis—one may almost say the Rossinis and Meyerbeers of our youth—have lost their admirers; and of Verdi, even, but two or three works remain attractive. The severer German school,

with its elaborate stage settings, seems to accord best with the tastes of a generation that, frivolous as it is, affects an intensity and seriousness which would hardly have suited the simpler habits of forty or fifty years ago; while the necessity for appealing to the general public, whose ideas of prices are considerably less lavish than those which prevailed in the old days, has made itself felt as one of the many causes of the decay of that old-fashioned exotic, Italian Opera. The conditions of its growth and culture have all changed, and it is no wonder that the once-flourishing flower should have drooped to its death.

And yet, when one considers the matter more closely, it becomes evident that another factor has been at work, to which, more perhaps than to any other one thing, is the decay of the Opera to be attributed. It is, perhaps, rude to say so, but the simple fact is that the ruin of the Opera in England has been brought about by the Prima Donna, who, naturally enough no doubt, took advantage of the insane competition in which managers lost their heads and their money, and opened her mouth so wide that she absolutely swallowed everything else connected with the business. Finally, there was nothing left for the public to see or hear but the one or two ladies who could command their own terms, and who demanded so much that it was impossible for the luckless impresario to pay enough to provide even respectable accessories. And so it came to pass that, on the nights when Madame Chose or Signora Cosa did not sing, nobody went to the theatre at all; and that, on the nights when they did appear, the expenses were so heavy that any reasonable profit was wholly out of the question.

Of the truth of this statement, ample proof is to be found in the two amusing volumes of autobiography which Colonel Mapleson has recently given to the world. The publication of one's Autobiography, or Memoirs, or Reminiscences, is one of the pet crazes of the day. Never was there an age when people were so fond of seeing themselves in print; and Colonel Mapleson is strictly in the fashion in giving us the history of his varied experiences as a manager of Opera. More than that, the Colonel is not only fashionable, he is amusing as well, which is not at all usual; and knows how to tell a good story at least as well as he knows how to manage a company of singers, or to organise a grand artistic tour of the world. And above

all things, which is most important for our present purpose, he proves for us to demonstration the axiom that the overpaying of singers—especially of Prima Donnas—has been practically the ruin of Italian Opera in England and America. In Italy itself, where there is still some Opera to be found, the absurdity never attained such colossal proportions, although it is possible that some of the Italian salaries which Colonel Mapleson mentions—such as five pounds a week for Mercadante, the composer of *Il Giuramento*, as conductor; or one hundred pounds per night for Mademoiselle Titiens as “star,” which were what the Colonel paid at the San Carlo, in Naples, in 1863—do not fairly represent the figures of to-day. And it is also worthy of note that the principal extorters of the pound of flesh have not been Italians at all.

Signor Mario and Madame Grisi, who were certainly two of the greatest lyric artists the world ever saw, and absolutely unapproachable by any pair of dramatic singers of the present day, received from the Colonel three hundred pounds a week on provincial tours, and must be reckoned to have been dirt cheap at the money, for they never gave themselves airs, were most obliging, and would have sung every night if the manager had asked them to do so, and “far from insisting that she should never be called upon to do anything that was not expressly set down for her in her written contract, Madame Grisi would often volunteer her assistance in cases where it was really very useful.”

The manager, in some of his later perplexities, and when he contemplated the prodigious salaries he had to pay and the very little he got in return for them, must have looked back with something more than regret, to the happy days when such a Prima Donna and such a first tenor were the backbone of his company. In 1872 things had already altered, for, as Colonel Mapleson was paying Mademoiselle Nilsson two hundred pounds per night, Madame Patti—who had previously been content with a trifle of eighty pounds nightly—insisted upon receiving two hundred guineas, and from about this time the trouble began, for with two ladies, neither of whom would take less than the other, and with two managers, each of whom was prepared to outbid his opponent, common sense and simple arithmetical calculations of possible profits gradually retired more and more into the background.

And at about this time Colonel Mapleson

having engaged a tenor—“my agent reached Rome before Mr. Gye, and secured the prize,” he says—“at the reasonable rate of two hundred pounds a month, an American agent offered the prize five times as much after his successful first appearance; an offer which, as the gentleman was already under contract for five years, made him ‘partially unmanageable,’ ” the Colonel records.

The two hundred pounds a night business for a Prima Donna went on for some time, and that amount seemed to be recognised as the legitimate and usual payment for the services of a lady of the first rank in the profession, and in 1875, Mademoiselle Titiens went to America for a series of concerts on a guarantee of one hundred and sixty pounds per night and half the receipts beyond a certain amount. It was not apparently until Colonel Mapleson, Madame Patti, and the United States came into conjunction, that the era of really frenzied and preposterous salaries fairly set in, but in the autumn of 1882, the Colonel, having nearly arranged with Madame Patti for the magnificent sum of eight hundred pounds per night, was obliged (to prevent Mr. Henry Abbey, a rival American manager, from carrying off the lady) to raise his offer to a “cool thousand;” burdened with which almost impossible load the next season had to begin. Singers and actors, it will be remembered, always ask for larger terms in America than they can get here, but a jump from two hundred to a thousand is rather startling, especially when we learn that Madame Nilsson only raised her price for America to three hundred pounds per night. Probably the success of the season of 1882 had made Colonel Mapleson indifferent to a paltry hundred or two per night. For, notwithstanding the prodigious salaries which he was paying to some of his singers, the business was sometimes fairly profitable. Fourteen thousand dollars were taken at one performance of “Semiramide” in New York; and “Lucia,” with Adelina Patti, drew a like amount from the citizens of Philadelphia.

One of the ingenious gentlemen who delight in useless little exercises in arithmetical analysis, applying their great minds to the calculation of the amount which was paid to Madame Patti for each note she sang, discovered that each note in “Semiramide” was worth to the Diva forty-two cents and five-eighths—a statement which was promptly contradicted by

another gentleman of the same tastes in another city, who put the value of each note at thirty cents, and also stated that "Lucia" was worth forty-two cents and a half per note.

The season of 1883 began in New York, and Colonel Mapleson found himself and his thousand-pound-a-night Prima Donna vigorously opposed by another Opera company, at the head of which was the enterprising and energetic Mr. Henry Abbey, who was bent—or so the Colonel tells us—on the total annihilation of Colonel Mapleson. The result is chronicled in one sentence: "Notwithstanding the successful performances which I continued to give," the Memoirs tell us, "the receipts never reached the amount of the expenditure—as is invariably the case when two Opera houses are contending in the same city," or, to put it in another way, when absurd competition between two managers raises the expenditure to an amount with which even first-rate business cannot cope.

Colonel Mapleson seems to think that a portion of the blame of these excessive salaries must be attributed to Madame Adelina Patti; but such a contention is obviously untenable. Why the lady should refuse such offers as were made to her, even though the fees were, as the Memoirs complain, twenty times as much as was thought ample by Signor Mario and Mademoiselle Titien, it is impossible to see; nor is Madame Patti to be blamed if, instead of being comparatively careless on such points, as were Mademoiselle Titien and Signor Mario, "no one ever approached her in the art of obtaining from a manager the greatest possible sum he could by any possibility contrive to pay." The criterion of the real value of anything, as we have been often told, is what it will bring in the open market; and if Colonel Mapleson was left during the New York season with an average of twenty-two to twenty-three dollars per night for himself, after paying Madame Patti her thousand pounds, and "distributing a few hundreds among the other members of the company," the fault lies in the system of wildly outbidding each other, by which operatic managers played into the hands of any popular singer who was clever enough to take advantage of the situation.

The strict business principles on which "the most money-making of Prime Donne" conducts her affairs, or has them conducted

for her, are very plainly shown in a story which Colonel Mapleson tells so well that it would be a pity not to allow him to speak for himself. It should be premised that Madame Patti's nightly thousand pounds were due and payable at two o'clock in the afternoon.

"On the second night of our engagement"—at the Globe Theatre in Boston—"we performed *La Traviata*. That afternoon, about two o'clock, Patti's agent called upon me to receive the five thousand dollars for her services that evening. I was at low water just then, and enquiring at the booking office, found that I was two hundred pounds short. All I could offer Signor Franchi was the trifle of eight hundred pounds as a payment on account.

"The agent declined the money, and formally announced to me that my contract with Madame Patti was at an end. I accepted the inevitable, consoling myself with the reflection that, besides other good artists in my company, I had now eight hundred pounds to go on with.

"Two hours afterwards, Signor Franchi reappeared.

"I cannot understand,' he said, 'how it is you get on so well with Prime Donne, and especially with Madame Patti. You are a marvellous man, and a fortunate one, too, I may add. Madame Patti does not wish to break her engagement with you, as she certainly would have done with any one else under the circumstances. Give me the eight hundred pounds, and she will make every preparation for going on the stage. She empowers me to tell you that she will be at the theatre in good time for the beginning of the opera, and that she will be ready dressed in the costume of Violetta, with the exception only of the shoes. You can let her have the balance when the doors open and the money comes in from the outside public; and directly she receives it she will put her shoes on, and at the proper moment make her appearance on the stage.' I thereupon handed him the eight hundred pounds I had already in hand as the result of subscriptions in advance. 'I congratulate you on your good luck,' said Signor Franchi, as he departed with the money in his pocket.

"After the opening of the doors I had another visit from Signor Franchi. By this time an extra sum of a hundred and sixty pounds had come in. I handed it to my benevolent friend, and begged him to

carry it without delay to the obliging prima donna, who, having received nine hundred and sixty pounds, might, I thought, be induced to complete her toilette, pending the arrival of the forty pounds balance.

"Nor was I altogether wrong in my hopeful anticipations. With a beaming face, Signor Franchi came back and communicated to me the joyful intelligence that Madame Patti had got one shoe on. 'Send her the forty pounds,' he added, 'and she will put on the other.'

"Ultimately the other was got on; but not, of course, until the last forty pounds had been paid. Then Madame Patti, her face radiant with benignant smiles, went on to the stage; and the opera, already begun, was continued brilliantly until the end."

There is little here of the carelessness in money matters which is popularly supposed to be a characteristic of the artistic mind. Madame Patti is evidently a woman of business, and looks upon a bargain as being a bargain and nothing else. And, after all, why not? A bird in the hand is safe, but there is no knowing what may happen even to two in the bush. And, talking of birds, it may be mentioned that Madame Patti's parrot had acquired what Colonel Mapleson calls "the disagreeable habit" of crying "cash, cash!" whenever the Impresario entered Madame Patti's car.

This car itself affords a very good measure of the preposterous scale in which money has been lavished on Prima Donnas, and furnishes one very good reason why the operatic managers who have made money are much scarcer than black swans. It cost twelve thousand pounds, and was fitted up with an ostentatious luxury which some people will call simply silly, and others positively wicked. Colonel Mapleson describes it thus:

"It was, without doubt, the most superb and tasteful coach on wheels anywhere in the world. The curtains were of heavy silk damask; the walls and ceilings covered with gilded tapestry; the lamps of rolled gold; the furniture throughout upholstered with silk damask of the most beautiful material. The drawing-room was of white and gold, and the ceiling displayed several figures painted by Parisian artists of eminence. The woodwork was of sandal-wood, of which, likewise, was the casing of a magnificent Steinway piano, which alone had cost two thousand dollars. There were several panel oil-paintings in the

drawing-room, the work of Italian artists. The bath, which was fitted for hot and cold water, was made of solid silver. The key of the outer door was of eighteen carat gold."

The only possible excuse for such monstrous extravagance as this is, that it was intended for advertising purposes. From any other point of view it is suggestive of Bedlam.

How many attendants the occupants of this Cleopatra's-galley on wheels required to wait upon them does not appear, but, on this head, Colonel Mapleson's account of the retinue of a tenor, who is certainly not of the very highest rank, will bear quotation.

This gentleman "went, not long since, to South America, with a staff consisting of the following paid officials: a secretary, an under-secretary, a cook, a valet, a barber, a doctor, a lawyer, a journalist, an agent, and a treasurer. The ten attendants, apart from their special duties, form a useful claque"—Madame Patti does not carry with her a claque, by the way—"and are kept judiciously distributed about the house according to their various social positions. The valet and the journalist, the barber and the doctor, are said to have squabbles at times on the subject of precedence. The functions of the lawyer will not, perhaps, be apparent to every one. His appointed duties, however, are to draw up contracts, and to recover damages in case a clause in any existing contract should have been broken. The hire of all these attendants causes no perceptible hole in the immense salary payable to the artist who employs them; and the travelling expenses of a good number of them have to be defrayed by the unfortunate manager. Only an Oriental prince, or a musical parvenu, would dream of maintaining such a suite."

Quite so, Colonel Mapleson, but why "unfortunate manager"? Foolish, will strike most people as being a more appropriate adjective.

In the Far West, especially in San Francisco, enormous business was done; but this must have been considerably discounted by the seven-hundred-and-fifty-pound house at Salt Lake City—which, although good enough under ordinary circumstances, was not remunerative when it fell short of the salary of one singer alone by two hundred and fifty pounds—and by the seven hundred pounds in the little city of Cheyenne. Indeed, it is difficult

to discover whether there was any nett profit at all at the end of the season, for Colonel Mapleson, in reviewing the result, says : "my losses were going on, for a long time, at the rate of twelve hundred pounds a week," so it may, perhaps, be fairly inferred that the crushing expenditure was too much even for the magnificent receipts in California, or the five-thousand-pound concert in the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City.

The following season, greatly assisted by a grand Opera Festival at Chicago, was successful, but in the next came disaster. San Francisco would not have the company, as it did not include Madame Patti, and the city of the Golden Gate became Colonel Mapleson's Moscow, the story of the retreat from which he tells with an absolutely delightful good humour and cheerfulness.

Thus it seems impossible to get away from the fact, that with a spoilt darling of the public such as Madame Patti, the manager is in the unpleasant predicament that, if he engages her, her salary practically swamps the enterprise, and that, if he leaves her out of his company, the public will have none of him. In fact, it is a case of "nec tecum nec sine te vivere possum." The only escape from the horns of the dilemma appears to lie in the direction indicated in Mr. Harris's management of last year, to which reference has already been made—in educating the public again to understand that a thoroughly good ensemble is infinitely better, from every point of view, than the system under which the star's salary starves the rest of the show, and in getting them to value, as they should, a good all-round company, at a higher rate than the traditional "ma femme et quelques poupees."

The proverb says that he who pays the piper has a right to call the tune. And there is no doubt that he has; but whether the tune will come when he calls for it is, as was the case with Owen Glendower's spirits from the vasty deep, extremely problematical. Money is only one of the troubles of the operatic manager. The tempers, the illnesses—real and imaginary—the jealousies, the spite, and the childish tricks of too many of his singers, are even worse trials to him, and the quarrels which go on, even in the best regulated companies, must daily convince him that the poet's statement that "birds in their little nests agree," is, so far as singing birds go, a mockery and a delusion.

For a host of good stories bearing on these points and many others, and for a cheery, genial account of a life in reference to the troubles and anxieties of which Colonel Mapleson says : "I can scarcely think of any dilemma in which I have been placed, however serious, which has not presented its bright, or, at least, when I came to think of it, its amusing side," readers should turn to the "Mapleson Memoirs." They will certainly be amused, and possibly, according to their various natures, edified.

OUR POINT OF VIEW.

IT is a great pity that the general run of people are not somewhat more methodical in their modes of thought ; for frequently the consideration of an important matter is of the most slipshod character. Preconceived opinions are applied to the subject in hand, and some sort of conclusion immediately jumped at. A more irrational method of conducting an intellectual process it would, indeed, be difficult to conceive. I know that it would be absurd to expect that individuals, constantly engrossed by the world's business, should plunge deeply into the region of metaphysics. Ordinary intellects are perhaps scarcely fitted, certainly not inclined, for the task. Were they to undertake the investigation of some profoundly abstruse problem, they would be promptly and inextricably involved in the quagmire of their own sophisms.

I, myself, am nothing of a logician. It would, therefore, ill become me to complain of the deficiency of others in that respect. Yet I believe that a little more of the rational element might, with very great advantage, be introduced into our modes of thought.

It would be neither practicable nor desirable to enlarge fully upon the many directions in which this failing manifests itself. There is, however, the particular aspect that I have selected as the topic for this chat ; and from which many of our failures to arrive at the truth derive their source, viz., "Our point of view."

By our point of view, I mean the attitude that we assume in regard to any given matter, and which is naturally influenced by our circumstances, intellectual bias, education, personal interest, and a hundred other things besides. To form ideas upon any subject that occupies our

thoughts, solely from observations taken from our point of view, is in many instances to give the lie to the facts. It is but seldom that our point of view will be wholly right, and every other conceivable point of view wholly wrong. The golden line of truth will more probably be discovered in the "juste milieu."

Science has recognised this necessary condition of progress. He who devotes himself to some field of scientific research divests himself of preconceived opinions, discards his prejudices, and utterly sinks his own peculiar point of view, travelling along the tortuous pathway of investigation and experiment with an open mind. He desires simply to unravel the truth, and instinctively recognises, with complete disregard of self, that the truth he seeks may, and perhaps will, be found in a totally different quarter from any that his tentative and conjectural theories have suggested. He takes a comprehensive survey of the whole array of facts, and then, having exhausted every available shred of evidence, carefully draws his conclusions.

If instead of a problem, in which material phenomena are concerned, some purely metaphysical point engages the enquirer's attention, he does not prematurely thrust his own crude ideas forward; but after carefully examining every hypothesis from every standpoint, selects that only which offers a satisfactory solution. This is the only sensible method of proceeding. But this is just the method which people in general will not adopt. Present to a person of ordinary, or even less than ordinary, ability a point of some subtlety for his explanation, and before the query is out of your mouth the solution is out of his. Temerity and assurance know no bounds, and again we see how true is the poet's dictum, that :

Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.

The man of discrimination is careful in his statements and diffident of pronouncing his judgements. He has a reputation to lose—a consideration which need not, and probably does not, trouble the fool. A conviction, to be of any value, must be based upon a general consideration of all the facts, viewed from every "point of view," and not upon "a hop, step, and a jump" process, equally shocking to the inductive and syllogistic schools of logic.

Of course everybody has his "point of view," his way of looking at things.

Formed by habit, it becomes part and parcel of one's individuality. Equally of course, people's "points of view" will differ. I am given to look at matters from one standpoint, you from another.

From Haman's "point of view," Mordecai was an arrant rascal, meriting the gallows, at least to the extent of fifty cubits; whilst from the standpoint of the royal Ahasuerus, he was "the man whom the king delighted to honour." From the "point of view" of the ultra-fanatical politician, the greatest geniuses of the opposite party are nothing more than a coterie of evil spirits, who scarcely conceal their horns within the most unexceptionable of tall hats, their caudal appendages beneath their elegant dress-coats, and their pedal conclusions in the most irreproachably polished of shoes. The "Ins" make an appointment. From their "point of view," the gentleman selected for the post is "a man whose exceptional ability has long been exercised for the behoof of his country, and whose acceptance of the position will give an added dignity to the office." Yet the "Outs" from their "point of view," characterise the whole affair as "a scandalous job," as "a barefaced attempt to pitchfork into a sinecure one who has betrayed absolute incompetence throughout the course of a singularly barren public career, and whose appointment will only serve to bring representative institutions into contempt."

When at last, in the evolution of political thought, the popular voice demanded the abolition of pocket boroughs, the reformers, from their point of view, could see in the object of their attack nothing but "anomalies," "crying scandals," "hotbeds of bribery," "sinks of iniquity," making a large demand indeed upon the copious vocabulary of opprobrious epithets. They of the defence, from the standpoint of antiquated prescription—discarding, of course, all interested considerations—discerned in the proposed change a violation of the laws of property; an unwarrantable encroachment upon vested interests; the irrevocable removal of an institution intimately associated with the glorious constitution of this country, and deeply rooted in the affections of the people; the thin end of a (hypothetical) wedge, that one day would upset the very throne itself, involving throne, church, and old nobility in a common ruin.

From the point of view of Milton, re-

garding chiefly what was glorious and sublime in human character, man is

A creature, who, not prone
And brute as other creatures, but induced
With sanctity of reason, might erect
His stature, and upright with front serene,
Govern the rest, self-knowing; and from thence
Magnanimous to correspond with Heaven,
But grateful to acknowledge whence his good
Descends.

But, from the unnatural standpoint of the carping cynic, this same man is a poor, wretched thing; an absurd anomaly; a freak of Nature; the only redeeming feature in the cynic's strictures being that from time to time some of his shafts rebound and strike himself; for is he not also of the race that he condemns?

One man, from his point of view, glares with inquisitive impertinence upon the affairs of others, ever on the "qui vive" for an opportunity of uttering his favourite dictum of "serve him right," walking the world a self-constituted prophet of Nemesis. To his jaundiced eye no calamity befalls his fellow but it is "a judgement upon him;" and in his narrow philosophy, and yet narrower heart, he thinks of his God only as a capricious tyrant, rankling with the bitterest spite.

There is "the fat and greasy citizen," the jocund soul, "in fair round belly, with good capon lined," who displays a truly remarkable fondness for guinea-dinner forms of philanthropy. What wonder if, from his point of view, he conceives the sumnum bonum to be already accomplished—"the greatest happiness of the greatest number," the greatest number, in this instance, being Number One?

But what of Poor Joe, hounded from haunt to haunt, the sport of officious constables, lurking at midnight in the shelter of a doorway with his head pillow'd against the stonework, hoping that sleep may prove less obdurate than the lynx-eyed activity of the law? And what of her, the "poor unfortunate," the victim of her own and the scapegoat of others' sins, who in the black darkness of the night plunges headlong from the dark bridge into the darker tide,

Rashly importunate,
Swift to be hurled,
Anywhere, anywhere,
Out of the world?

Who shall cast the first stone of reproach at them because, from their point of view, and out of the bitterness of an unextinguishable anguish, they spurn life itself as hardly worth the terrible effort of living?

Those who are unfortunately obliged to call in green spectacles to the assistance of their vision, obtain a decidedly distorted view of Nature. They gaze upon the works of Nature and man through unnatural media. To them, rocks, clouds, rivers and sky, are all of as verdant a hue as the emerald of the fields. Their impressions are strangely at variance with the truth. It is just so with persons who assume one immutable point of view, and, with an obstinacy that defies all reasoning, logical or persuasive, form biased and distorted opinions concerning their fellows and their concerns, the world and its problems. Wrapped in the exclusiveness of their own narrow creed, they see naught but evil and folly in the tenets of the rest of the race. Or, from the standpoint of their own smug philosophy, they regard all those who are not of their one-sided school, but have burst the fetters of intellectual thraldom, as not having emerged from mediæval darkness.

There is much to be said upon both sides of everything; or, if the matter has more than two sides, depend upon it there is much to be said upon every side. No single human intelligence can contain all the wisdom of the world, for the part will always be less than the whole. To form accurate and discriminating opinions, we must place ourselves in imagination in those "points of view," from which others take their survey of men and things. We should thus discover what they would have to say upon the theme in hand, and doubtless find that many of their impressions are glittering with the gold of truth, whilst many of our own ideas, viewed in the light of their wisdom, stand convicted of shallowness, insufficiency, and falsehood.

Who would pretend to a knowledge of some historical building, who had merely taken a superficial glance at its front elevation, or boast of his familiarity with a range of hills, who had caught but a distant glimpse of their extremity, rising like a dark triangle against the sky? The northern aspect is not the object itself; neither is the southern aspect. It must be contemplated from every aspect before you can be said to know it. It is just so with subjects of thought. No merely superficial glimpse, no intuition is sufficient. To trust intellectual problems to the slipshod process of intuition, to exalt our unaided intuition to the throne of our thoughts, is to ignore the important fact that other people have their intuitions also,

which lead them frequently to very different conclusions.

To place ourselves temporarily in the standpoints of others for the purpose of circumnavigating a fact, which I advocate, is one thing. It is quite another to drift about from "point of view" to "point of view," in an utterly aimless manner like a vessel bereft of rudder, or of compass. I had rather have a man opinionated, adhering rigidly to one "point of view," than possessed of no principles of his own—veering about "with every wind of doctrine;" ever assenting to the last speaker's proposition; an intellectual jelly-fish with never a morsel of vertebra or cartilage in his construction. Some people change their opinions far oftener than the vane takes a new position. The fox in the fable, gazing upon the luscious attractions of the pendant grapes, was prepared to defend by every method known to syllogism or induction the conclusion that the grapes were sweet. Two hours passed over that fox. Circumstances were gradually altering the case. A logical train was developing in his mind as he "licked his chops." Finally he was as ready to advance the proposition that the grapes were sour as formerly to demonstrate their saccharine merits. So the unarticulated "thinkers who never think" vacillate from pole to pole with truly marvellous celerity. They assuredly do change their "point of view," but, to quote a hackneyed expression, they fail to "benefit by the change."

To perpetrate a "volte-face" every time that we are confronted with a new idea is not to exercise discrimination. A somersault displays a class of agility which may be highly commendable in a physical sense; but the acrobatic thinker, who turns head over heels upon his own philosophy, and jumps through the hoops of his old argumentative system, is a ludicrous, rather than a meritorious personage. When I advocate the changing of one's "point of view," it is not that I recommend the adoption of any other point of view, but that each may be tested in order to ascertain which approximates most nearly to the line of truth.

The distance of the sun from the earth is generally arrived at by observing the planet Venus in its transit across the solar disc. A certain result called the solar parallax is deduced from the joint observations of many astronomers distributed at parts of the earth as remote as possible from one another. "Parallax," we are

told, "is the apparent change in the position of an object due to a change in the position of the observer." Every social problem, every political propagandum, every subject of thought has its parallax. Every individual who treads the crust of earth, whether colossus or pygmy, has his parallax. To arrive at just conclusions respecting any object in the field of vision, we must change our "point of view," not adopting any one "point of view" as meeting the full necessities of the intellectual vision, not unquestioningly swallowing every dogma that may be "put upon us as pigeons feed their young." We should exercise a wise discrimination as to what is true and what is false in the standpoints of others, and above all in that sacred precinct, hedged in by prejudice and guarded by conceit—our own "point of view." Let us once regard that venerated spot as harbouring, perhaps, some little fallibility, and we are in a fair way to a fuller discernment of the true relations of things. We shall take not merely our own single observation of the intellectual transit as affording sufficient data for the formation of just conclusions, but, accepting with "open minds" the evidence of others, arrive at the true parallax of every question that engages human thought.

THE TROTH OF ODIN.

BY C. GRANT FURLEY.

A STORY IN THIRTEEN CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER IV.

"*JE n'y consens pas ; je n'y consentirai jamais.*" These last words of his mother's letter were definite enough; and Gaspard knew that Madame Harache was a woman of her word, who did not say things she did not mean, nor express a resolution she purposed breaking. Had she said of any other project of his, "I will not consent to it," he would at once have accepted the decision as final, and have made up his mind either to renounce his plan or to defy his mother. Probably he would have decided for renunciation; for he was not of that nature which makes a man cling to his own way simply because it is his own way. In most things he would, either from amiability or from indifference, have pleased another rather than himself,—and this, not from that weakness of nature which can be pestered into yielding, but from an equitable, peace-loving tem-

perament which would rather give up a scheme than raise a quarrel. There was, perhaps, a strain of weakness in this anxious amiability to please others at almost any price; but beneath it lay a certain permanence of soul, which kept amiability from degenerating into sheer inveterate lack of will. He was the sort of man whom a clever woman can put in a corner, but who, once there, will cling to his two walls, and will not be persuaded by any lure to leave their shelter and give his opponent further advantage—a man weak to overcome, strong to resist.

But, in this matter of giving up his hope of marrying Thora Sweynson, Gaspard could not yield at once. It did not concern himself only. When a man has gained a girl's heart, he owes a responsibility to her as much as to any other who claims his allegiance by the bond of law or love. Her feelings have the right to influence, though not, perhaps, to determine his actions; she is inevitably the central point around which his thoughts crystallise and ultimately shape themselves into deeds, not because he loves her, but because she loves him.

At present, however, it seemed that, in face of Madame Harache's refusal to consent to the marriage her son desired, all action was impossible. The refusal was the only part of the letter that Gaspard remembered after he had read it. The proposed marriage with Mademoiselle Meudon passed through his mind without awakening even the glimmer of surprise he might otherwise have felt at his mother's determination to make him marry at all. He had never given any thought to the question; but he felt instinctively that she was not likely to wish for any influence over him that might lessen, and perhaps supersede, her own.

Certainly, Madame Harache would hardly have cared to marry her son if she had not looked upon matrimony as a safeguard against such missions to distant places as this Orcadian one of Gaspard's; and, even then, she would not have been so determined on it if Sophie Meudon had not been all that she desired in a daughter-in-law, a girl whose money and connections would be useful to Gaspard, and who, moreover, seemed to carry modesty and obedience to the point of stupidity, a girl whom she (Madame Harache) might hope easily to rule.

But the marriage was by no means such

a settled thing as she gave Gaspard to believe. She had had an interview with Monsieur Meudon, in which the two parents had agreed that, if the young people liked each other, such a marriage was desirable, and had parted after a few compliments on the merits of each other's children.

"You think too highly of my son," said Madame Harache, finally, in courteous depreciation; "yet I believe he is indeed of the material from which one makes a good husband. He has never caused me anxiety; the follies in which other young men indulge are foreign to his nature. He will adore his wife—above all, a wife so charming as Mademoiselle Sophie will be."

"Ah! these follies, madame, are not always to be regretted," answered Monsieur Meudon. "A man appreciates '*la vie de famille*' the more for them; he does not know wherein his real happiness lies till he has tried the false happiness they give. Still, Gaspard is a young man whom I honour and trust; otherwise, I should not be willing to confide my Sophie to him, although the marriage is the one I would most desire for her. She is so gentle, so modest, so timid, so innocent of the wrongs and cruelties of this world. She needs a good husband."

"She does. I have observed her, how quiet she is. Yet La Tante Cathérine—forgive me, I should have said Madame Reyer—says she has much intelligence."

Madame Reyer—La Tante Cathérine—was a sister of Monsieur Meudon's, who acted as his housekeeper and his daughter's chaperon, a middle-aged lady of unenthusiastic disposition, with a rare talent for silence. This talent she used to the utmost when conversation turned upon her niece. She waited till friend or neighbour had said all they could in praise of Sophie's gentleness and modesty (her two most obvious characteristics), then added quietly, "elle a beaucoup d'intelligence," or "mais cependant il ne lui manque pas de l'intelligence." Some listeners thought they perceived a satiric tone in the remark, and thence concluded that her aunt considered Sophie rather beneath the average in brain-power, and insinuated in this fashion that she just escaped hopeless stupidity. The majority, however, thought the words merely signified a protest against Mademoiselle Meudon's moral qualities being magnified at the expense of her intellectual powers—affection claiming more for the beloved object than the outside world could perceive in it; as when the

mother of a baby whom one has conjecturally described as healthy because of its lack of obvious charms, says reproachfully, "and it is pretty, too."

But Madame Reyer valued a good, satisfying, non-compromising remark too much to spoil its usefulness by too clear an explanation of its shades of meaning.

Monsieur Meudon told his sister of the project of marriage set on foot by Madame Harache. "But let Sophie know nothing of it," he said; "she is too young still for marriage, and we must wait for Gaspard's return before we consider the matter too seriously."

"I will not tell her," said Madame Reyer, with one of her satiric smiles, "it will not be necessary."

"What do you mean, Cathérine?"

"I tell Sophie few things, yet she learns many," answered La Tante, enigmatically.

Monsieur Meudon was still bewildered; but he knew that his sister was not to be coerced into explaining more of her meaning than she chose. He considered himself a prudent man, but as for Cathérine! He was a regular tattler by her side. "You should have been a man and a diplomatist, ma sœur," he said to her once; "you would have been in the first rank."

"No," she had replied, "only in the second. I can keep silent, but I cannot look stupid. The first rank in diplomacy belongs to those who know all and seem to know nothing."

The words had been uttered years ago; and Sophie—a child of eight years old, somewhat over-indulged by her father because she was motherless, and made the companion of him and her aunt—had been hushing her doll to sleep in a corner of the room. For a moment the cradle-song ceased, then was resumed rather more loudly than before. Sophie had learned her life's lesson.

Madame Reyer forgot her remark; and never thought of connecting any of her careless words with a fact which she noticed more and more in her niece as she grew towards womanhood, namely, that her obvious and unconquerable dulness in comprehending mere lessons was compatible with a mysterious acuteness in discovering things which were not included in the course of her instructions.

"She uses her brain too much in looking for mysteries, to have any to give to history and music," said La Tante, with a touch of scorn, and puzzled herself a little in wondering if it was from the Meudon

side that Sophie took her characteristic. "She is like me," she decided, "in being curious, and knowing when to be silent; but my brother and I like straight paths, she prefers crooked ones. That must come from her mother."

Seeing, however, that her niece was determined on her rôle of amiable stupidity, she permitted the general opinion of her to pass unchallenged, save by the complimentary statement, "elle a de l'intelligence." And beneath the irritation which Sophie's peculiar talent caused her, she felt a certain amusement when, as sometimes happened, she could trace its workings. She would even permit opportunity for it, for the sake of observing the result. There was a certain callousness about Madame Reyer, the result of a mind too narrowly analytical, a nature in which the brain dominated the heart. She did not love her niece enough to be distressed, though circumstances often made her feel annoyed, at her manœuvres to discover secrets that were hardly worth finding out. It amused her, as it amuses some people to see a kitten steal the milk that would be given to it in a few minutes. Such observers forget that the kitten is certain, sooner or later, to steal something not intended for it, and La Tante Cathérine showed no greater comprehension than they of the tendencies implied by acts that were in themselves unimportant and harmless.

On the day of Madame Harache's visit to his office, Monsieur Meudon, though so determined to keep the matter of Gaspard's vicarious proposal to himself, could not help glancing at his daughter with a new interest. He was trying to picture to himself what effect her slim figure and rather stooping carriage, her somewhat colourless hair and eyebrows would have on a man. She was not pretty; but there was an air of tender helplessness about her that moved his heart, and her slimness still belonged to that angularity of youth which, to some minds, has more fascination than a riper beauty. There was certainly something touching in her aspect.

"She looks young — la petite — in spite of her eighteen years," he said across the dinner table to his sister. "It is not easy to think that she has become a demoiselle à marier."

Madame Reyer noted a quick flutter of the girl's eyelids. But after a moment, Sophie lifted her head very slowly, and turning towards her father gazed at him with a bewildered look, while her lips

parted in a vague, sweet smile. Her smile was exquisite ; it transformed her face from its usual rather heavy expression to one of childlike innocence and brightness.

"A demoiselle à marier, papa ! " she said, in a slow soft voice, and laughed a little, slowly and softly too. "How strange the phrase sounds, applied to me ! "

"It must come some day, chérie. That is what you are now ; some day you will be a wife. Ah ! "

Sophie rose from her place, and went to her father's side.

"No, no," she murmured, kissing him. "One must love one's husband better than one's father, n'est-ce pas ? And that would be impossible for me."

Madame Reyer looked on the scene with cynical interest. "She will make him tell her everything this evening," she said to herself, and by way of giving her prediction the opportunity of verifying itself, she left father and daughter alone for half an hour. On her return she saw that Monsieur Mendon looked a little discomposed ; but Sophie was bending over her embroidery as calmly as usual.

Next morning she said to her aunt, quietly : "It is then Gaspard Harache that I am to marry."

Madame Reyer expressed no surprise at the girl's information ; but she answered her coldly. "It is Gaspard Harache that his mother and your father want to marry you to ; that is not quite the same. A young man does not always accept the wife his relatives wish ; and after his travels, Gaspard may wish to marry in the English fashion, without consulting his friends."

A sudden crimson flushed the girl's cheek. "You mock me, ma tante," she said, "because I am not beautiful."

"Not at all. If you can once gain a man's attention, you will keep it ; you are more clever than people think you, and you have tact. It is the first glance that will be difficult. If you gain that from Gaspard, you will gain all. I only suggest to you the difficulties you may meet with."

"Ah ! " sighed the girl ; but it was a sigh of thought, not of regret.

"She will succeed," thought her aunt. "It will be interesting to see her at work."

To Madame Reyer the world was very much an oyster, not for her to open, but to enjoy—to savour and digest without much consideration for anything but her own pleasure. She was interested in her

niece ; she found endless amusement in the subtlety that lay beneath that placid countenance, and her amusement made her tolerate a character which otherwise she would have despised, being, after all, an upright woman, who was incapable of a meanness. But she had no sympathies, and, had she known the full complication of affairs — the disturbing element of Gaspard's love for Thora Swayson, in the otherwise perfect scheme — it would only have interested her the more. She was looking forward to the study of Sophie, destitute of beauty or of obvious talent, winning the love of a young man. Had she known that it was to be a duel à outrance, between a plain woman and a pretty one, interest would have risen to delight. She would still have predicted Sophie's success, having a profound belief in the dominance of brain over beauty.

"It is the question of soul and body," she had said once in arguing the point dispassionately, with no personal interest in it ; "and a bad soul can conquer even a fine body. Do you suppose it was her beauty that brought lovers to the feet of Ninon de l'Enclos when she was eighty ? Assuredly not. But she had talent, the instinctive knowledge of men's natures, which is worth more than beauty or youth ; it was that which conquered. She was a bad woman, a depraved woman, you will say ; but she was sensitive—as a barometer is sensitive, I mean, without emotion or conscience. Beauty ! Bah ! it is not beauty that rules the world, and the beauties of old times were often plain enough. They say that Cleopatra was freckled, and that Marie Stuart had a squint ; yet men thought them lovely, and sacrificed life and soul for them. To make men think you beautiful—that is another matter from being so, and is worth more."

Had Gaspard Harache, however, heard Madame Reyer's arguments he would not, at this stage of his life, at least, have believed them. Thora and her beauty were everything to him, and his mother's letter, refusing her consent to his marriage, plunged him into a sort of rebellious despair. He could not give up Thora, yet he was impotent to win her while her guardian insisted on his mother's consent, thus peremptorily refused. He went to Mr. Traill and told him the result of his appeal ; resisting the temptation to pretend that it had met with a totally different answer.

"So your mother will not hear of your marrying Thora," said the minister, after Gaspard had in a few words told him all. "I don't wonder; there was never a mother yet that liked her son to marry a stranger; it's the 'daughters of Heth' over again. For Thora's sake I am glad. It would have been a sore risk for her to have gone among a strange people and strange ways; and she might even have been perverted from the true faith. Yes, it's a good thing; in my momentary weakness I was going to consent to a marriage that the lass might have lived to rue."

"Never while I lived!" exclaimed Gaspard, impetuously, interrupting the old man's reflections. "If I might only have the chance of proving how I could strive to make her happy!"

"Ah! so you think," said Mr. Traill; and then, seeing the gloomy look on the young man's face, he could not keep from adding: "And in good truth, laddie, I'm sorry for you."

"You are sorry for me!" exclaimed Gaspard, bitterly; "and yet you will not leave me one spark of hope. Is it so easy to give up a woman whom one loves, whom one adores? I cannot do it; she is my soul; I cannot part from her."

"What do you mean?" asked the minister, sharply.

"I mean—nothing. I only speak my despair."

"I hope so. If I thought you intended any harm to Thora——"

"Not that! No, I swear to you I mean no harm. But to love her—to devote my life to her—is there harm in that? And why should the veto of my mother, who has never seen her, who does not know how sweet and pure she is, render it impossible? God knows that my love for Thora has no wrong in it! He can judge our intentions as well as our acts."

"When it's a woman that's in the question, you've got to consider other folk besides God," answered the minister. "That sounds like blasphemy; but He knows it's not. And I think you'll please Him better by giving up your own wishes for the sake of Thora's good name, than by bringing shame and disgrace upon her through your selfishness. I've no belief in the love that degrades its object."

"Nor I," returned Gaspard. "I would kill myself rather than make Thora a shade less pure than she is; she is for ever sacred to me. But if I were willing to

give up my country, to live here, or anywhere in Britain?"

"You would regret it soon enough. No woman can wholly fill up a man's life; and then, if you tire of her, what is to hinder your leaving her, and going back to your own country as a free man? There's no use in your making such suggestions. There is no form of marriage possible between you that is valid all the world over; and to any other I will not consent. Understand this, and as you are a man of honour, strive no longer after a thing that cannot lawfully be yours. When do you leave Stromness?"

"The 'Belle Armande' sails in three days. I have arranged to return to le Havre in her," answered Gaspard.

"During that time you must not enter the Manse, nor hold any communication with Thora. I am sorry that our pleasant intercourse should end so abruptly; I was fond of you, Mousieur Harache; but that cannot be helped now. We must be strangers to each other."

Gaspard accepted the dismissal. He murmured a few words of thanks for the minister's hospitality, and went out. In the narrow passage he met old Osla, who was hanging about, waiting for him.

"What did he say?" she asked, eagerly. "Are you to have your own way?"

"No, Osla; it is impossible. Your master speaks truth, but it is hard to bear."

"And are you to go away, and never see the bonnie bairn again, and she breaking her heart for you? Oh! these auld folk, how cruel they are!" protested Osla, under her breath, forgetting that she, too, was, according to her reckoning of years, one of the old.

Her words shook Gaspard's resignation. "I must see her again," he exclaimed, "if it is only to bid her farewell. Can you arrange it, Osla?"

"Ay, that I can," said the old woman, whose heart went with the lovers. "Just ye come into the garden at eight to-night, and gang to the corner where the elder-trees are, and I'll see that Thora gets out to meet you."

It was September now; the long summer days were over; and at eight o'clock in the evening there was darkness enough to cover Gaspard's slipping round the Manse to the corner of the garden, and Thora's gliding out of the house to meet him.

He told the girl in a few, bitter words of his appeal to his mother, and of the

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minister's unconditional refusal to permit a marriage between them. She could scarcely repress a cry of despair. The hope of reaching her fairy-land that had buoyed her up of late was snatched from her without hope of recovery.

"Gaspard, Gaspard," she cried, "I cannot bear it, you must not leave me here. To have known you, to have hoped so much, and then to lose you and all you promised me. It is too hard, too hard!"

"My Thora," he answered, with a grave tenderness, though he repressed the longing he felt to clasp her in his arms, "my Thora, it is not more hard for you than for me. I love you with all my soul; without you my life is cold, and miserable, and worthless to me; but what can I do? My mother, your guardian, unite in opposing our love; it is impossible for me to oppose them."

Thora turned her head angrily away.

"You love me like—a Frenchman," she cried, bitterly. "You care more for your mother's bidding than for my love; you are a man, yet you submit like a child, like a cur! Go back to your own country; I do not want you; I do not care for such love as yours. He who will not make an effort to win a woman, does not deserve to get her."

She moved away a step or two; but Gaspard caught her hand and detained her.

"Thora," he exclaimed, "do you not understand that it is for your sake I hesitate? Ah! chérie, you are too innocent to understand how you tempt me. If I did not love you better than myself, I should bid you defy all risks and come to me. If I but knew of a way to make you mine that would bring no cloud on your smooth brow, do you not think I would take it gladly?"

The girl pressed closer to his side again. "Gaspard, there is a way," she whispered. "There is a marriage that demands no consent of friends or kindred, nothing but the heartfelt love and true promise of man and maid—there is the Troth of Odin."

Gaspard started. "You do not know what you are saying," he answered, trying to speak coldly, while he longed with all the fervour of youth and passion to cover with kisses the lips that pleaded his own

desires. "You would tempt me to selfishness. You know how Mr. Traill regards the bond of which you speak."

"Mr. Traill! Is his opinion worth anything, except when he is speaking of antiquities? Everybody laughs at what he says about the troth-plight. Osla, his own housekeeper, was wed by it, and dare he say a word against her? It is a true marriage, as good as if ten ministers blessed it."

Gaspard struggled still against himself; but more feebly. It was not easy to be strong with Thora's face so near his own, and Thora's voice arguing against his conscience, for what meant happiness to her as well as to him. The world and its laws stood between them; but the world is such a despicable foe in the eyes of youth that it seems a shame to yield to it, and its laws appear to be made only to be defied. When one studies them closely, one begins to ask if it is right to obey regulations founded on mere selfishness, and on the assumption that a man's lower nature is that which permanently rules him—and passion emphasizes the question and gives the answer.

"Do you accept the Troth of Odin as true and lawful, Thora?" asked Gaspard at last, after a long pause.

"Yes."

"Then, so will I; and I swear to be as perfectly faithful to its bond as if the whole world saw and approved our weddng."

Passion had conquered. Honour, vanquished and forgotten for the moment, stood aside and bided her time.

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